UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.5/1991/3
15 January 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Thirty-second session
Vienna, 11-20 February 1991
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

MONITORING OF INTERNATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

Major issues and programme activities of the Secretariat and the regional commissions relating to social development and welfare and specific social groups

Report of the Secretary-General

*E/CN.5/1991/1.

V.91-20353 7335T

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION		1-2	3
I.	SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE	3-24	3
	A. Summary of substantive issues	3-9	3
	B. Programme activities	10-24	4
II.	YOUTH	25-50	7
	A. Summary of substantive issues	25-38	7
	B. Programme activities	39-50	9
III.	AGING	51-73	12
	A. Summary of substantive issues	51-58	12
	B. Programme activities	59-73	14
IV.	DISABLED PERSONS	74-99	17
	A. Summary of substantive issues	74-85	17
	B. Programme activities	86-99	21

INTRODUCTION

1. The provisional agenda of the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-second session, as approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1989/131, includes an item entitled "Monitoring of international plans and programmes of action". Under this, the Commission, in accordance with its resolution 31/3 (annex), 1/ will monitor international plans and programmes of action, particularly in the areas of social welfare, youth, aging and disabled persons, review concurrently the activities of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna, and receive reports from the regional commissions and relevant expert group meetings. The Commission will base its discussions on a report of the Secretary-General summarizing the substantive issues and related United Nations activities in the relevant areas, as well as on other reports that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council may refer to the Commission for its consideration.

2. The present report has been prepared in response to the above-mentioned resolution of the Commission. It contains summaries of the substantive issues relating to social development and welfare, youth, aging and disabled persons and related United Nations activities at the global level. An addendum to the present report contains a summary of issues and related United Nations activities at the regional level.

I. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE

A. Summary of substantive issues

3. The brief period since 1987, when the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future 2/ were adopted by the Interregional Consultation on Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes, held at Vienna from 7 to 15 September 1987, has witnessed rapid political and economic changes, affecting all parts of the world and countries at different levels of material development and with different social systems.

4. Among the most dramatic recent changes are the socio-political and economic developments in east and central Europe, marking a transition from central planning and central direction in many spheres of life. Only slightly less remarkable has been the shift of emphasis to the market as the organizing principle of the economy in many other countries. Across the globe, there is a reassessment by Governments of their role, especially as organizers of economic activity and promoters of the social welfare of citizens. This is parallelled by a rise in popular sentiment for genuine participation and the resurgence in many parts of the world of a vigorous civil society, that is, the mushrooming of organizations and membership of civic, community and social interest groups operating in the area between the public sector and the private enterprise economy. This development, the intensity of which was not foreseen in the Guiding Principles, was nevertheless emphasized as a trend to be supported.

5. These trends need to be seen also in the context of the changes occurring in the world economy. The long-evolving system of ever more closely linked national economies is turning into a unified, global economy, whose weakest parts are exposed to recurrent crises, and increasing threat of marginalization. Efforts to adjust and to restructure, to deal with the foreign debt and

to retain viability, have brought heavy social costs, especially in many developing countries.

6. Most of the problems dealt with in the Guiding Principles have not yet been resolved - and were hardly expected to be resolved in the short term. Some, such as mass poverty, have become even more pressing. In recent years, however, greater attention is being given to social issues and it is now recognized that the social dimension needs to be incorporated into all stages of development activity. Many countries are in the process of reorienting their social development and welfare policies and the heightened interest of Governments in social policy issues can be enhanced by more effective international support in the implementation of local and national developmental social welfare strategies.

7. A primary focus of developmental social welfare is to assist the development of the capacity of the individual, family, and the community: encouraging and opening the way for self-reliance and self-help; and promoting participation and the creation of conditions in which the powerless are "empowered". The provision of adequate care and social support for the individual remains an important component of the concept behind social welfare. Whether by governmental agencies or private organizations, provision of services to individuals and families experiencing severe and complex social dysfunctions is a matter of relevance not only in the developed countries and so-called Welfare States, but also in countries or regions where the greater proportion of the population are suffering from widespread and chronic problems of poverty and dependence.

8. These problems are being tackled by numerous types of policy, from employment to health and education, but there still remains a need for additional protective, preventive, curative and developmental social services directed toward individual conditions. At the same time, it becomes more important to focus on broadly based programmes to deal with the root causes of such problems as poverty and dependence.

9. Rapid social change on the one hand, and limited funds for social programmes on the other, call for changes in the organization and administration of social programmes, including changes in the role of Governments and other sponsors of social welfare activities. More flexibility and adaptability of social programmes at all levels is required, with a special emphasis on their sustainability and on the genuine participation of all concerned in both the design and the implementation of programmes. Social programmes need to build on the expertise and resources of target populations and take their cultural and social background into account. In this context it is important to encourage "South-South" co-operation as a means of replicating social programmes that successfully induced social change while working within the tight fiscal and skill constraints faced by the Governments of most developing countries.

B. Programme activities

10. Programme activities have responded to the changing concerns and needs of the international community. This is reflected in the Guiding Principles, which were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 42/125, with its emphasis on Secretariat activities that would provide direct support to Member States, and in other actions of the Assembly, such as its proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of the Family (Assembly resolution 44/82). The period under review has been one of transition in the United Nations Office at

Vienna, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, of the United Nations Secretariat pending, inter alia, a final decision on the division of responsibilities and corresponding resources following the decision by the Secretary-General to make the United Nations Office at Vienna the nucleus for social policy and social development activities in the Secretariat.

11. In the period under review, reports of the Secretary- General were prepared on the Preparation for and observance of the International Year of the Family (A/44/407 and E/CN.5/1991/2), the International Year of the Family (A/45/365), and the present report on major issues and programme activities of the Secretariat and the regional commissions relating to social development and welfare and specific social groups (E/CN.5/1991/3).

12. A publication has been issued on Social Policy in Transition: Adjusting to the Needs of the 1990s. 3/

13. Technical publications are being prepared in several areas covered by the Guiding Principles. A reference work has been completed on South-South co-operation in the social area, providing information on the principal institutions engaged in international co-operation located or active in developing countries. Work is under way on three studies dealing, respectively, with recent innovations in individual social welfare services and the function of such services in different political, economic and socio-cultural circumstances, the economic returns from social spending, and the relationship between social conditions and environmental problems.

14. Plans have been finalized for resuming publication in 1991 of the International Social Development Review.

15. In connection with a number of special functions carried out by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna on behalf of the Secretary-General, background papers were prepared on social conditions and policy options in several countries and a number of related missions were undertaken.

16. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs participated in the European Conference on Integrating Social and Family Policy for the 90s, organized by the Government of Malta (Valetta, 1-5 November 1989), and prepared a paper on the subject. It also participated in and assisted with the substantive organization of an expert group meeting on the negative social consequences of alcohol use, organized by the Government of Norway, which also acted as host to the meeting (Oslo, 27-31 August 1990). The meeting was organized in the context of follow-up activities to the Interregional Consultation on Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes. The report of the meeting is contained in document A/C.3/45/3.

17. As part of the follow-up activities of the Interregional Consultation, and the preparatory work on priority themes selected by the Commission for Social Development to be considered at its thirty-second session, the Government of Finland financed and acted as host to an expert meeting on the social impact of the critical economic environment on developing countries: strategies for social development co-operation (Järvenpää, 17-21 September 1990). The meeting was organized by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and was attended by 14 government experts and 10 government observers. The meeting identified various obstacles to social progress and to international

co-operation in the social field, and made recommendations, for the consideration of the Commission for Social Development, on new approaches to social development strategies and for strengthening co-operation based on the concept of partnership. The report of the meeting is contained in document E/CN.5/1991/5.

18. In co-operation with the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs organized an interregional seminar on statistics and indicators on the social situation of families (Yalta, 6-15 December 1989). The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs also helped to organize, in association with the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research and the Soviet Association for Family and Health, an international seminar on family planning and health services - the potential role of social work (Moscow, 8-15 September 1990). It also participated in the international expert meeting on the role of voluntary organizations in crisis management: acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), drug abuse and mass migration as cases in point (Berlin, 18-22 November 1990), held under the auspices of the Government of Germany as part of the follow-up activities of the Warsaw Conference of European Ministers of Social Affairs and regional follow-up of the Interregional Consultation on Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes; and in the meeting of the Bureau of the Warsaw Conference, for which the Government of Finland acted as host (Helsinki, January 1991).

19. Substantive preparations are well under way for an international symposium on social services in major cities, to be held in 1991.

20. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs represents the Secretary-General on the board or executive committee of several bodies of the United Nations system or affiliated to it. It was represented at meetings of the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Co-operatives (COPAC), the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research.

21. Emphasis has been given to support for operational activities, focusing on macro-social issues and related social analysis, programme design and evaluation, social information systems and training of personnel.

22. At the request of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a programme advisory note on social policy and development was prepared. An expanded and revised version is nearing completion. With the support of UNDP and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, high-level advisory services, on a continuing basis, were organized and supported in response to requests by the Governments of Bolivia, Chad and Peru. Advisory missions were undertaken to Indonesia, in the context of follow-up activities to the Interregional Consultation, and missions to other countries, at their request, are being planned, subject to the availability of resources.

23. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs participates in the Steering Committee of the Social Dimension of Adjustment project in Africa, sponsored jointly by UNDP, the World Bank and the African Development Bank. In this context, the Centre participated in two missions to the United Republic of Tanzania and developed the training component of a major project in that country. The Centre also participated in a workshop organized by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with the aim of delineating future

co-operation with the United Nations organizations concerned, alleviating the social impact of adjustment programmes supported by IMF.

24. Since the beginning of 1990, the functions previously undertaken by the Interregional Adviser on Youth Policies and Programmes, located within the United Nations Office at Vienna, were expanded to cover a broader area of social policies and development. In this capacity, the new Adviser undertook missions to Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, Cyprus, Indonesia, Mongolia, Peru, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania.

II. YOUTH

A. Summary of substantive issues

25. In almost all instances, the issues confronting youth today concern society as a whole. Moreover, youth issues, which have interdisciplinary and intersectoral dimensions, need comprehensive as well as consistent attention in many different policy areas. It is in this context that the General Assembly, in its resolution 40/14, endorsed the guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth, contained in the report of the Advisory Committee for the International Youth Year on its fourth session (A/40/256, annex), which provide a basis for an ongoing global strategy on youth, and for the follow-up to the International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (1985).

26. A central concern of the guidelines is the need to formulate and implement comprehensive youth policies and programmes within the context of an integrated approach to development policy and planning. This requires strengthened and improved national capacities for policy-making, planning and implementation, and the development of national infrastructure to facilitate the full and effective participation of youth in development. The guidelines identify various steps in the evolution of a national youth policy, as well as sectors and subgroups of youth that call for specific action.

27. Many activities have been undertaken at all levels within the framework of the guidelines. Recently, such activities have ranged from skill training in out-of-school programmes and identifying the needs of specific subgroups of youth, to reviewing existing legislation and assessing governmental and non-governmental youth-related programmes. There has been an increase in the number of national youth organizations. Two basic features of the follow-up period at the national level are enhanced efforts to formulate and implement integrated national youth policies and programmes, and the increasing recognition of the vital role of national co-ordination mechanisms in youth policy development. Despite many achievements, numerous problems persist, at all levels, in the development of effective youth policies and programmes.* It should be noted that many countries do not have specific policies and programmes on youth as part of their over-all development strategy or plan.

---

*A detailed description of progress achieved and obstacles encountered in the implementation of the guidelines is contained in recent reports of the Secretary-General (A/44/387 and A/45/422).

28. There is particular concern that the momentum created by the International Youth Year and the impetus to sustain follow-up activities have been declining at the international and regional levels. In order to stimulate renewed action at all levels, the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year, in 1995, will present a suitable occasion to focus global attention again on youth issues, particularly in the light of the changing international political and economic situation and its impact on youth and youth-serving organizations.

29. To this end, and to initiate the process of identifying priorities and needs, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1989/51, requested the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-third session to prepare a draft programme of action to mark the tenth anniversary of the Year, for implementation at the international level, and to identify future strategies in the field of youth, a request that was taken up by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/59. The draft programme is to be submitted by the Commission for Social Development, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

30. The General Assembly, in its resolution 45/103, emphasized the need for a review and appraisal of the progress achieved and obstacles encountered in the implementation of the guidelines and, in the light of that appraisal, the need to initiate preparation of a global youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond; the programme of action should have a target orientation and be carried out within a specific time-frame. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to draft such a programme in accordance with proposals to be submitted by Member States, the United Nations and non-governmental youth organizations, and in consultation with the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system and the relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its forty-sixth session. The Assembly also decided to devote a plenary meeting to youth questions at its fiftieth session in 1995, which marks both the fiftieth anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations and the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year.

31. To ensure that the tenth anniversary of the Year succeeds in mobilizing the required effort at all levels, the often difficult conditions that confront young people must be acknowledged. A deeper understanding of their current situation and prospects will be essential to the successful promotion of improved educational, professional and living conditions for young people and their active participation in national development.

32. A large proportion of young people is unprepared for meeting the demands of a fast-changing social and economic environment. At the same time, young people often have aspirations that society cannot meet. Without the benefits of full participation and integration into the social and economic life of their countries, they are both vulnerable and frustrated.

33. The overriding need for fuller and more effective participation by youth in society is now more widely recognized. Such participation can be real only if the young are seen not only as objects of the social development process but also as its subjects, not solely as resources for development, but as partners in decision-making. They should have the right to participate in economic, social and political life and, the right to expect that their participation has a purpose and is taken seriously. Thus, participation of youth is both a goal in itself and a means of improving prospects for the attainment of development and peace.

34. An issue of far-reaching importance is youth unemployment and underemployment. Without appropriate integration into the world of work, the young face the danger of economic and social marginalization, with its added, potentially grave, repercussions on society at large. The work available to young people, in formal employment or in self-employment, is often hazardous or unhealthy, keeps many young people close to economic marginalization or is often without prospects, all of which can lead to psychological and cultural alienation.

35. Considerable progress has been achieved over the years in education and training. Facilities and opportunities in many countries nonetheless remain totally inadequate or have deteriorated in the 1980s in many parts of the world in conditions of economic crisis and fiscal constraint. Educational reform has often not kept pace with the rapid social, economic and technological changes that are taking place. Large numbers of children leave formal education ill-equipped to cope with the world of work and with the pressures of changing society.

36. Special attention also needs to be paid to the position of young people in marginal situations, such as the disabled, migrant workers, refugees, young offenders, the economically most underprivileged in both rural and urban areas, and those who for many other reasons are prevented from playing a full part in society.

37. Young women are especially likely to suffer from entrenched discrimination. Their reward is in many cases not commensurate with their contribution to the economy or society. Young women continue to be denied the same opportunities as men for training and better paid employment, although some improvement in this respect in parts of the world or in certain strata of society is evident.

38. Drug abuse and alcoholism among young people have become major problems in many countries. The incidence of AIDS among young people is increasing alarmingly in some parts of the world and is a major new problem for society. The widespread degradation of the environment also means that youth may inherit a world of increasing threats to the well-being and even survival of future generations.

B. Programme activities

39. The United Nations Office at Vienna, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, designated by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/97 as the focal point for youth matters within the United Nations system, has undertaken in the period under review various activities to ensure appropriate follow-up to the International Youth Year and to promote, at all levels, the implementation of the guidelines for further planning and follow-up in the field of youth. This has involved, among other things, helping Governments and national machinery on youth to enhance their capacities for youth work by providing policy guidance, information, technical expertise, direct operational support and advisory services. The Centre has also continued to promote interagency collaboration in the field of youth and co-operation with youth and youth-related non-governmental organizations.

40. Two reports of the Secretary-General were prepared on policies and programmes involving young people: participation, development, peace (A/44/387 and A/45/422). They provide an overview of activities at the national, regional

and international levels for the implementation of the guidelines and recommendations concerning the further implementation of the guidelines.

41. A technical publication on the assessment of the role and performance of national co-ordination mechanisms on youth was prepared, based on the proceedings of the International Meeting on Establishment and Development of National Machineries for Youth (see paragraph 43 below). Two technical publications are being prepared: (a) Youth and AIDS: Strategy on Information and Educational Programmes for AIDS Prevention and Control; and (b) a compendium of selected United Nations mandates to assist Governments in the formulation of national youth policies.

42. Three international meetings on youth were organized. The Consultative Meeting on Interregional, Regional and National Co-ordination for Integrated Youth Policies and Programmes (Pattaya, 2-5 November 1989) was convened by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It was attended by representatives of the United Nations Secretariat, ESCAP, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Commonwealth Youth Programme, the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of American States. The Meeting examined the planning and co-ordination of assistance for youth programmes in developing countries, reviewed the situation of co-operation and co-ordination in the United Nations system and other bodies, formulated recommendations to improve co-ordination to make programmes, including advisory services, more effective and responsive to the needs of Member States, and considered ways of channelling more aid directly to youth programmes. Ways of improving information exchange and encouraging applied research, evaluation and training were also considered.

43. The International Meeting on Establishment and Development of National Machineries for Youth (Bangkok, 8-12 November 1989) was convened by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, in co-operation with ESCAP. It was attended by senior decision-makers, scholars and practitioners from 20 developing countries. The Meeting adopted guidelines for the establishment and development of national co-ordinating structures on youth policies and programmes, which: (a) reiterate the central role of a policy framework for co-ordination of action related to youth development; (b) set forth a strategic perspective on establishment and development of national co-ordinating mechanisms on youth; and (c) identify specific areas for technical co-operation which relate to policy, sectoral and procedural co-ordination, as well as information and development support communications.

44. The Government of Spain financed and acted as host for the symposium on the Integration of Young People into Society (Toledo, 4-8 June 1990), which was organized by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in co-operation with the Youth Institute of the Ministry for Social Affairs of Spain as part of the preparatory work on priority themes selected by the Commission for Social Development to be considered at its thirty-second session. The Symposium was attended by participants from 20 States members of the Commission for Social Development, observers from organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and an international youth non-governmental organization. The Symposium identified policy options and made recommendations for the consideration by the Commission for Social Development. The report of the symposium is contained in document E/CN.5/1991/4 and Corr.1.

45. Information and promotional activities have included: (a) dissemination of the guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth; (b) publication of the Directory of Selected International and Regional Youth and Youth-Related Organizations; (c) preparation of a Directory of Centres and Institutes Engaged in Youth Research; (d) publication of the Youth Information Bulletin; (e) publication of the International Youth Year Follow-up Newsletter; (f) dissemination of information through circular letters and other means; and (g) the award of testimonials in the field of youth: the Secretary-General awarded testimonials to one individual* and five organizations** in recognition of dedicated service in support of the United Nations youth programme.

46. The guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth (A/40/256, annex) emphasize, in particular, the need for the continuity of national co-ordinating committees or similar mechanisms created during the International Youth Year. The role of a national co-ordinating committee or similar co-ordination mechanism is long-term planning, co-ordination and evaluation of the national youth policy. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs has encouraged and promoted the establishment of such mechanisms and strengthened its relations with existing mechanisms through correspondence, advisory services, monitoring of national level activities and exchange of information.

47. The maintenance and strengthening of channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations is a principal on-going function. The Centre provided substantive and technical assistance to the Geneva Informal Meeting of International Youth Non-Governmental Organizations and to the Vienna NGO Committee on Youth. Among other things, the Centre participated in an international student seminar on humanity nearing the twenty-first century: changes and challenges, organized by the International Union of Students (Nicosia, 8-10 April 1989).

48. As the co-ordinator of the Informal Inter-Agency Working Group at the Technical Level on Youth, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs organized the seventh meeting of the Working Group (Vienna, 4-5 December 1989). The Working Group, which is composed of the Centre, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Volunteers programme, adopted several recommendations aimed at ensuring a comprehensive and integrated approach to youth issues within the United Nations system. The recommendations were subsequently brought to the attention of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination.

49. Technical co-operation activities included those of the Interregional Adviser on Youth Policies and Programmes, who provided advisory services to

---

*Dato Sri Mohammed Najib Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Minister of Youth and Sports of Malaysia.

**AFS Intercultural Programs; Commonwealth Youth Programme; Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement International; International Union of Students; and World Young Women's Christian Association.

Governments, at their request, for the development of long-term integrated national youth policies and programmes. In 1989, the Interregional Adviser undertook missions to Colombia, the Comoros, Cyprus, Ecuador, Somalia and Trinidad and Tobago. Since January 1990, the post has been transformed into that of Interregional Adviser on Social Policies and Development, whose responsibilities include the promotion of youth programmes and projects.

50. The United Nations Youth Fund continued to provide support to catalytic and innovative youth-related activities in developing countries, with emphasis on the least developed countries.* Between January 1989 and June 1990, seven requests were approved for funding, totalling $US 38,000. Additional resources, of over $US 150,000, were mobilized by the Fund through co-financing or seed-money grants. It is a matter of concern, however, that the financial constraints of the Fund continue. Although the Fund participated for the first time since its establishment at the United Nations Pledging Conference in 1989, the contributions to the Fund have continued to decline. As of 31 December 1989, the balance of the Fund was $US 68,681 as against many pending requests whose combined need for financial assistance is several times greater. The willingness of the international community to strengthen the Fund through financial contributions is essential if it is to sustain the interest and follow-up to the International Youth Year and assist in attaining the goals established in the guidelines.

III. AGING

A. Summary of substantive issues

51. In recent years, there have been two distinct streams of discussion on aging. One stream, pre-dating the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Aging, 4/ adopted by the World Assembly on Aging in 1982, focuses on aging in the context of public expenditure on pensions and health care. The other and more recent stream of debate relates to a search for complementary or alternative aging policies - and here "help for self-help" is emerging as a viable alternative. Help for self-help is especially important in securing acceptable levels of living for the elderly in developing countries and in countries in transition from central planning. It emerges as an increasingly attractive policy also in market-oriented and Welfare State systems. The non-governmental sector has pioneered much innovative work in self-help. Governments throughout the world support such measures but have expressed a need for more research to assist them in developing comprehensive and integrated programmes and policies.

52. The populations of developing countries, though generally still young, have, with some exceptions, begun to age - but are projected in the coming decades to age rapidly. The phenomenon is attributable to declining levels of fertility and general improvements in nutrition, health and hygiene throughout the life-span. In developing countries, most women and men have continued to participate in such activities as food production, craft work, housework and education of children and youth into old, even very old, age. Retirement for many has been synonymous with death. Today, apart from the minority receiving

---

*For a detailed description of the operation of the United Nations Youth Fund, see A/44/387 and A/45/422.

adequate pensions, old people must usually work for survival - their own survival and that of their families. Despite this tradition of work, and a dire need to work in periods of national economic difficulties, the elderly have not received adequate attention in the mainstream development activities of recent decades. Advisers on aging point to a general reluctance on the part of both the public and private sectors to invest in the elderly, and have elicited the following reasons for that reluctance: (a) the elderly are not seen to represent an investment in the future; (b) the elderly are not considered flexible and quick to adopt new technologies; and (c) the elderly usually come outside the scope of organized employment in industrialized countries; these are impressions that influence developments in non-industrialized countries.

53. Ironically, as development co-operation has tended in past decades to export an "age-segregated" participatory model to developing countries, the developed countries have begun to search for ways to re-establish an age-integrated society by opening up opportunities for the elderly in social and economic community life. Developed countries have found that early retirement on pensions, while providing leisure of up to 40 years for many retirees, is costly in terms of financing and also in maintaining intergenerational cohesion. Up to 40 years of leisure tend to exclude individuals from significant roles in society, and prevent many from supplementing an unsatisfactory retirement income and contributing to the economy. The young and middle-aged work-force may begin to resent having to support an increasing number (as is the case at present) of non-working elderly.

54. One reason why early retirement in developed countries has increased in recent years is that Governments have encouraged it in their efforts to fight unemployment, seeing it as a means of narrowing the gap between the supply and demand for labour. There has for some time been a trend towards voluntary withdrawal from the work-force by older workers in countries where pensions have risen substantially, although many older workers take on various forms of less formal employment or work. Policy-makers now see that, in addition to the burden of financing it, early retirement, once established, comes to be considered an acquired right and is difficult to reverse in the event a larger work-force is needed. Policies that support maximum use of a country's human resources are increasingly seen as important for both the economy and society. Policies supporting flexible retirement patterns are increasingly being considered.

55. There is thus a clear trend towards providing opportunities for older workers in developed or developing countries, in keeping with their needs and the needs of their societies. Four important mechanisms used to that end are: (a) skill or job training; (b) job redesign and job creation assistance programmes; (c) the introduction of more flexible work schedules; and (d) improvements in providing information and clarifying procedures regarding job-seeking.

56. With international development strategies for the 1990s placing a greater emphasis on small-scale and "appropriate" technologies, opportunities emerge for integrating the elderly into mainstream development. Intergenerational projects may be launched, encompassing small-scale, community-based initiatives requiring only modest sums of money. Cumulatively, however, those small sums could be very large. For example, funds are needed, especially in developing countries and in countries in transition from central planning, to support the capitalization and start-up of self-help enterprises, to provide technical assistance for planning, management, training and evaluation, and to undertake

the research necessary for improving performance and providing policy-makers with the data to enable self-help activities for the elderly and their communities to be integrated into national development plans and programmes.

57. While self-help for income security is a pre-eminent need for the elderly in all parts of the world, self-help strategies would also encompass other sectors, such as health, housing and education, and the family, lines along which the International Plan of Action on Aging 4/ is divided. Self-help could constitute an important integrative focus for the period 1992-2001, the second decade of the Plan of Action.

58. The approach of 1992, the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Plan of Action, focuses attention on the changes that have occurred since 1982. The social, economic and political changes that are taking place compel a close examination of the aims and ideals set forth in the Plan of Action: ideals difficult to attain in developed countries, very far from attainable in developing countries. While the general aims of the Plan of Action remain valid, there is a need to select specific targets for the Plan's second decade. These targets should be reachable, and could possibly relate to self-help measures. The selection of specific targets, and the elaboration of well-defined strategies for reaching them, may be considered the single most important task at this time in the implementation of the Plan of Action.

B. Programme activities

59. In the period under review, the United Nations Office at Vienna, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, prepared an action programme on aging for 1992 and beyond, contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the question of aging (A/45/420) to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Aging. The action programme was prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/50, which was adopted on the basis of discussions at the thirty-first session of the Commission, and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/106.

60. The action programme on aging for 1992 and beyond has a practical focus. A number of concrete projects are suggested at the local level - involving neighbourhoods, the business sector, the media and the elderly themselves - and co-operation by the formal and informal sectors is envisaged. The action programme also lists themes, activities and organizational arrangements for a national anniversary programme in 1992 to help raise awareness of and preparation for aging.

61. National and global target-setting is called for and the identification of specific, feasible, measures to concentrate scarce resources during the decade 1992-2001. The process of target-setting should encourage a dialogue between Governments, experts, community organizations, and the elderly - and could engender wide-ranging collaboration in reaching the targets.

62. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, as co-ordinator of the 1992 anniversary programme, is initiating a series of consultations with its networks on aging and, as extra-budgetary resources become available, will bring together experts to examine the results of these consultations. A set of draft targets on aging for the decade 1991-2001 will be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. Target selection could produce four benefits; it could help to: (a) identify what is feasible, and how; (b) mobilize available resources; (c) maximize co-operation;

and (d) provide a leading edge for the eventual implementation of the complete Plan of Action.

63. The targets selected for the decade 1992-2001 would be based, inter alia, on priorities identified in the second review and appraisal of the implementation of the Plan of Action conducted by the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-first session and adopted by the Economic and Social Council (resolution 1989/50, annex 1). They could then form the basis of the questionnaire for the third review and appraisal to be sent to Member States in the first quarter of 1992 in preparation for the third quadrennial review and appraisal of the implementation of the Plan of Action, which will be conducted by the Commission at its thirty-third session, in 1993.

64. The 1991 report on the world aging situation, now being prepared, will include analyses of selected issues of special importance to developing countries, and will provide information relevant to the selection of specific targets for the decade 1992 to 2001.

65. The Centre prepared two reports of the Secretary-General on the question of aging (A/44/420 and A/45/420) (the latter comprising the action programme on aging for 1992 and beyond) and a report entitled "Second review and appraisal of the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Aging" (E/1989/13). A technical monograph is being prepared, based on the findings of the second review and appraisal, supplemented by four regional profiles on aging prepared by ESCAP, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and ESCWA, and funded by the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Trust Fund for Aging.

66. In co-operation with Member States, the Centre has prepared a draft publication entitled Profiles of National Co-ordinating Mechanisms on Aging. National mechanisms are government-designated ministries and non-governmental entities which co-operate on questions of aging. As a result of an international seminar organized in collaboration with the Government of Malta, the Centre has developed technical guidelines for programme and project planning for the participation of the elderly in development. It co-operated with COPAC in the preparation of a joint publication entitled Manual on Co-operatives for the Aging. The Manual is available in English and is being translated into French and Spanish.

67. Issued three times a year, the Bulletin on Aging reports on activities of the United Nations system, Governments and professional and volunteer organizations. In 1991 and 1992, the Bulletin will be devoted to encouraging and reporting on activities for the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Plan of Action.

68. The third ad hoc inter-agency meeting on aging, held at Vienna from 30 November to 1 December 1989, focused on preparations for the tenth anniversary, and on the selection of concrete targets for the decade 1992-2001. Targets, once selected, could form the basis of a system-wide medium-term plan on aging for the 1990s - another goal of the meeting. The fourth inter-agency meeting will be held at Vienna from 21 to 22 February 1990, and will elaborate collaborative strategies for the anniversary year 1992, and for the following decade.

69. The Centre represented the United Nations at the XIVth International Congress of Gerontology, held in Mexico from 18 to 23 June 1989, which was attended by 3,000 experts. At the Congress, the Centre organized a symposium on implementation of the International Plan of Action: the first decade supported a workshop on humanitarian and developmental programmes; and contributed to numerous round-table discussions. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna made the inaugural speech at the Congress and presented four testimonials for outstanding support of the United Nations programme on aging and implementation of the Plan of Action, particularly in developing countries.

70. The Centre maintains regular contacts with several networks on aging that it helped to establish in recent years. Representatives of the networks participated in developing the action programme and have indicated broad support for its implementation. The networks include 93 policy-oriented national mechanisms on aging, some 70 research-oriented institutes, 60 advocacy-oriented non-governmental organizations (members of the Committees on Aging in New York and at Vienna), and 25 mainly sectorally oriented agencies and bodies of the United Nations system.

71. In 1989 and 1990, the United Nations Trust Fund for Aging received some 20 requests for financial assistance, of which six were approved for funding, totalling $US 78,400. The Department of Technical Co-operation for Development of the United Nations Secretariat, together with the United Nations Office at Vienna, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, supported advisory missions on policies and programmes for the elderly in the Dominican Republic, Guinea and Togo. Missions to Argentina, El Salvador and Indonesia are being planned.

72. The need to respond to existing and increasingly urgent issues of global aging is well documented and politically inevitable, but financial resources do not correspond to these needs. This gap between needs and resources prompted the General Assembly to welcome initiatives to establish an independent foundation on aging that would support the work of the United Nations system in the field of aging by mobilizing public and private resources (General Assembly resolutions 42/51 and 43/93). In accordance with this mandate, the Secretary-General convened a meeting of eminent persons at United Nations Headquarters in September 1989 to discuss and make recommendations for an international fund-raising strategy for population aging. The Secretary-General submitted a report (A/44/420/Add.1) on the outcome of this meeting to the General Assembly, which, in its resolution 44/67 noted the initiative with satisfaction.

73. Efforts are under way to establish in Paris, under the patronage of the United Nations, the Banyan Foundation: A World Fund for Aging. While autonomous, the Banyan Foundation will be closely associated with the United Nations system through the United Nations Office at Vienna, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. Its main goal is to empower the elderly to maintain maximum independence and the ability to contribute to society in the context of the International Plan of Action on Aging. To that effect, the Foundation will serve to secure and broker funds from private, national and international sources and allocate these resources to specific projects and programmes. It will establish subsidiaries, to be known as Friends of the Banyan Foundation, in countries where major contributions from corporate resources are received. The Foundation adopted its name from the banyan tree,

the symbol for longevity and wisdom, which was used as the logo of the World Assembly on Aging in 1982.

IV. DISABLED PERSONS

A. Summary of substantive issues

74. Recent developments in the field of disability may be summarized as follows: The World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons 5/ was revolutionary in its basic philosophy of emphasizing the active role of persons with disabilities as agents in improving their own well-being, rather than as objects of care. Consequently, during the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, the focus has shifted from prevention and individual-centred rehabilitation toward equalization of opportunities. This approach has been promoted especially by the organizations of disabled persons themselves.

75. The current discussion emphasizes the right to independent living instead of care-taking and institutionalization; the need to influence society to accommodate all its members instead of adapting and rehabilitating disabled persons to meet the needs of the social and physical environment; the role of disabled persons and their organizations as experts in the needs of disabled persons, instead of having an expert view imposed from outside.

76. It is also increasingly emphasized that a group-specific approach based on overt "qualities" of people leads to the creation of a non-sustainable mosaic of small-scale service projects and segregation or even marginalization of the weakest of these groups. An integrated and integrating social policy approach has, therefore, been adopted in many developing and developed countries. This approach is aimed at changing the social and physical infrastructures to reach a society that can provide all its members with more equal access to the resources necessary for self-reliant living.

77. The urgent task now and in the years to come is to put into practice the new concepts that have been developed and to give practical content to established goals. This view led the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1989/52, to call on Member States, bodies and organizations of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to further the practical implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons during the second half of the Decade of Disabled Persons, based on the list of priorities and programmes set forth in the annex to General Assembly resolution 43/98, and to request the Secretary-General to report to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-second session on the implementation of the above-mentioned resolution.

78. The Council also invited the Secretary-General to convene an expert meeting on the best possible ways of marking the end of the Decade. An expert meeting was subsequently organized by the United Nations Office at Vienna, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs with the Government of Finland as host (Järvenpää, 4-11 May 1990). The meeting identified, inter alia, three priorities for the activities for the end of the Decade:

(a) The second round of monitoring of the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons should be considered as an awareness-raising campaign;

(b) A long-term strategy towards achieving "A society for All" should be developed;

(c) The convening of a ministerial-level world conference on disability in 1993 should serve to ensure political commitment for these goals.

79. The expert meeting recommended that the second round of monitoring of the World Action Programme should provide Governments with the means of heightening awareness of disability issues, as well as reviewing the policies of the bodies concerned and considering their experience and achievements as contributions to a forward-looking strategy. It further recommended that monitoring should provide reliable data on progress made and obstacles encountered in the implementation of the World Programme of Action. In this regard, the results of the second round of monitoring were seen to provide basic data on the situation of disabled persons, as well as policy options on the basis of which a specific forward-looking strategy could be formulated. Also, more descriptive information on successful policies, programmes and projects needed to be collected to serve as models, adapted to different socio-economic and cultural settings.

80. The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons has been effective in making Governments, the public and the international community more sensitive to disability issues. In order to turn this heightened awareness into action, a long-term strategy was proposed, with priority targets, a precise schedule of activities and a specific time frame. The object of the long-term strategy should be to integrate disabled persons fully into society as equal partners, in the spirit of creating "a society for all", which would accommodate all the differences of its individual members. The strategy should take into account the variety of national and regional conditions and possible policy options.

81. A realistic and sustainable long-term strategy requires consensus and a political commitment in the designation of targets and the elaboration of the long-term action plan to achieve those targets. The expert meeting recommended that the required political commitment to action to advance the realization of the concept of "a society for all" could best be ensured through a ministerial-level world conference.

82. In order to take fully into account the different regional conditions, preparatory work was best done at the regional level, with the active involvement of organizations of disabled persons. The development of the long-term global strategy would be entrusted to a competent interregional expert group, which could provide guidance to national and regional efforts, and orchestrate the national and regional strategies into a harmonious global strategy accommodating the different needs of the various regions.

83. Regarding implementation of the other provisions of the Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/52, the following measures may be highlighted:*

(a) To increase the visibility of disability issues and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, a global awareness campaign is planned to coincide with the end of the Decade. Efforts are being made to mobilize the necessary initial funding (or seed money);

---

*For further information, see the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Feasibility study on alternative ways to mark the end of the Decade of Disabled Persons" (A/45/470).

(b) An elaborate project document on the setting up of an information network and a computerized reference unit has been prepared and has been submitted to potential sponsors for funding. A disability data base has been established at the United Nations Office at Vienna, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. With the completion of its basic structure, the data base will contain information on: documents available in the reference services of Disabled Persons' Unit; institutions dealing with disability, including United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations and national disability committees; and projects;

(c) On 20 March 1990, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, circulated a letter to heads of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies requesting information on the progress made in implementing General Assembly resolution 44/70 regarding implementation within the United Nations system of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, particularly on the accessibility of premises and meetings to disabled persons to which the following replies were received:

(i) The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), ESCWA, UNICEF, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), FAO, UNESCO, WHO and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) reported firm commitment and considerable success in implementing the resolution. ECLAC reported that the matter merited further consideration. At the United Nations Office at Vienna, a review of conditions suggested that considerable progress could be made in improving accessibility at a comparatively low cost through co-operation between administrative and other offices concerned and staff members with functional limitations. An example of such co-operation was the "walk-around" task force, consisting of staff members with functional limitations and Buildings Management, which identified and sought to eliminate physical barriers to accessibility on the premises.

(ii) In order to improve the dissemination of information in accessible formats, a Braille service was initiated by the United Nations Office at Vienna, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. A step-by-step extension of the service was envisaged;

(iii) Accessibility to meetings organized by the Centre had been improved by ensuring adequate provisions for sign language interpretation and the setting of documents in Braille. As long as the regular budget component for such services remained inadequate, special services to disabled persons were largely dependent on the positive attitude of host countries and organizations;

(d) To identify problems encountered in the establishment and functioning of national disability committees and other co-ordinating mechanisms, and to develop ways and means of reactivating and enhancing the capabilities of such mechanisms, the Centre organized the international Meeting on Roles and Functions of Natinal Co-ordinating Committees on Disability in Developing Countries, held at Beijing from 5 to 11 November 1990. The meeting adopted guidelines for Member States comprising: a declaration, "Towards a Society

for All": the Roles and Functions of National Co-ordinating Committees on Disability in Planning and Development; principles for the establishment and development of national co-ordinating committees on disability; technical co-operation in the field of disability: the role of national co-ordinating committees; and strategies for implementation;

(e) To collect experience on the functioning of disabled persons' organizations, a questionnaire was sent to more than 200 such organizations. A manual on the development of organizations of disabled persons is being prepared. Pilot programmes have been developed in 10 countries to promote and support the establishment of non-governmental organizations and associations of disabled persons. Material on suitable training programmes in organizational development has been provided to two countries. The Centre also held three consultative meetings with major international non-governmental organizations;

(f) To encourage comprehensive legislation to promote and protect the rights of disabled persons, a manual on national disability legislation in developing countries is being prepared. Preparatory work related to the Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/26 on the elaboration of standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons has been initiated. Both activities are financed through extra-budgetary resources;

(g) Work on a manual relating to the integration of the needs, rights and concerns of disabled persons in development planning has been started, financed through extra-budgetary resources, as part of the activities of the Centre in the area of disability and development co-operation;

(h) The relationship between disability and aging, especially in view of current demographic trends, will require increasing attention in the future. This issue is on the agenda of several other organizations of the United Nations system;

(i) The rights and specific needs of certain groups of disabled persons, such as disabled women, children, the deaf, the mentally disabled and the multiply disabled receive less attention in comparison with those of other groups of disabled persons. Within the Centre, the Division for the Advancement of Women organized a seminar at Vienna in August 1990 to review the current situation of disabled women and girls. The problems of other especially vulnerable groups of disabled persons will be given special attention in future activities.

84. In its resolution 45/91, the General Assembly expressed its desire to encourage the continued and practical implementation of the World Programme of Action beyond the current Decade of Disabled Persons. It stressed the need to achieve the objectives set out in the agenda for action until the end of the Decade and the preliminary outline of a long-term strategy to the year 2000 and beyond: a society for all, contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the feasibility study on alternative ways to mark the end of the Decade (A/45/470). It also requested the Secretary-General to shift the focus of the United Nations Programme on Disability from awareness-raising to action. The Assembly stressed the need for priority to be given to action-oriented programmes that would renew international consensus and elicit sustained political commitment by Member States to implement the World Programme of Action beyond the Decade and would ensure the continued improvement of the situation of disabled persons; it also requested the Secretary-General to assist in

establishing and strengthen national co-ordinating committees and to promote and support the establishment of effective national organizations of disabled persons; and it emphasized the need to strengthen the Disabled Persons Unit of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, within existing resources, in order to enable it to implement the objectives of the decade.

85. During the General Assembly, many representatives expressed the view that the activities for the end of the Decade should consist of actions that would have a lasting impact and would be truly beneficial to those whose plight the Decadé was designed to improve. It was felt that available resources should be put to the best possible use in implementing activities that would improve the conditions of disabled persons, particularly in developing countries.

B. Programme activities

86. During the period under review two reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons were prepared for submission to the General Assembly (A/44/406/Rev.1 and A/45/470).

87. The United Nations Office at Vienna, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, organized three major meetings in the field of disability: the International Meeting on Human Resources in the field of Disability, held at Tallinn, from 14 to 22 August 1989; the Expert Group Meeting on Alternative Ways to Mark the End of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, held at Järvenpää, from 7 to 11 May 1990 (see paragraph 78 above); and the International Meeting on Roles and Functions of National Co-ordinating Committees on Disability in Development Countries, held at Beijing from 5 to 11 November 1990 (see paragraph 83 (d) above).

88. Inter-agency meetings on the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons were convened and reports on the meetings issued in both 1989 and 1990. Inputs were provided, inter alia, by two consultative meetings of non-governmental organizations organized by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Promotion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and the Disabled Persons Unit.

89. The format of the Disabled Persons Bulletin was changed. The Bulletin currently appears three times a year. Copies are available in English, French and Spanish, and in Braille. New directories of national disability committees and of non-governmental organizations in the disability field have been prepared by the Centre. A directory of experts working in the field of disability is being prepared and will be completed in 1991. A new brochure on United Nations activities in the field of disability was produced in 1990 by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Tallinn Guidelines on Human Resources Development in the Field of Disability, adopted by the International Meeting held at Tallinn, are available as a booklet. Technical guidelines for establishing and strengthening national disability committees are being made final.

90. The Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons continues to support catalytic and innovative projects to benefit disabled persons, particularly in developing countries. During the period from January 1989 to June 1990, disbursements to support 33 projects totalled nearly $US 430,000, but the gap between the demand for funds and the availability of resources is growing. New pledges to the Fund have declined. The

Expert Meeting on Alternative Ways to Mark the End of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons recommended, inter alia, that the Fund should be continued beyond the end of the Decade of Disabled Persons in 1992, to support priorities beyond the Decade.

91. The Centre, in co-operation with UNDP, provided technical assistance to Governments and non-governmental organizations, including associations of disabled persons, in Benin, Chad and Côte d'Ivoire.

92. Fact-finding missions were undertaken in several developing countries. In connection with the project on the manual on national disability legislation in developing countries, visits were made to Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Swaziland and Zimbabwe; in connection with the project on options in integrating the needs, rights and concerns of disabled persons in development planning, visits were made to China, India, the Philippines and Thailand; and a visit was made to the Administrative Council of the Association départementale des Amis et parents d'enfants inadaptés (France).

93. Staff of the Centre also participated in the following meetings: Interregional Seminar on Orthopaedic Technology in Developing Countries (Senegal); Committee on Assistance to Disabled Afghans (Switzerland); "The Deaf Way: International Festival and Congress on the Language, Culture and History of Deaf People" (United States of America); International Conference on Rehabilitation of Disabled Children: Present State and Future Trends (Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic); First All-European Dialogue on Social Policies, organized by the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research and the Finnish National Board of Social Welfare (Finland); planning session for an international conference on disability, organized by the National Council on Disability (United States); Social Development Committee of the World Blind Union (Finland); preparations for an exhibition and conference on new technologies for disabled persons, organized by the National Council on Disability (United Nations).

94. Two Professional and one General Service staff posts are currently funded from extra-budgetary resources provided by the Government of Sweden to support the Centre's activities in this area, and in 1990 one Professional and one General Service staff member were recruited to the Disabled Persons Unit from extra-budgetary resources contributed by the Government of Finland.

95. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Promotion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons continues to carry out activities in co-operation with and complementary to those of the Disabled Persons Unit. Activities that heighten awareness of the situation of disabled persons and raise funds for projects supported by the Trust Fund receive priority.

96. Projects and activities that are not adequately funded through the established mechanisms are presented by the Special Representative to selected potential sponsors for consideration and support. Various other fund-raising initiatives are being developed, in consultation with international organizations of disabled persons, with the object of providing support to projects in developing countries. The Office of the Special Representative is encouraging aid agencies to support or develop activities that would benefit or assist the disabled population.

97. The Special Representative maintains regular contact with a network of government agencies, international non-governmental organizations, voluntary organizations and service clubs, providing information on the current status and the needs and concerns of disabled persons, as well as encouraging co-operative and complementary assistance to meet the needs of the disabled population in the developing countries.

98. Progress is reported in a co-operative initiative involving the Special Representative, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and UNIDO, to develop and expand the transfer of knowledge and technology in the developing countries for the manufacture and distribution of equipment for use by disabled persons. The establishment of the first of possibly three wheelchair-manufacturing facilities is imminent. The Special Representative has also secured a commitment for the funding of a significant number of wheelchairs, over a three-year period, for distribution to the most needy disabled recipients in the countries involved. The Office is at present engaged in a similar undertaking to serve the needs of hearing-impaired persons in developing countries.

99. The Office of the Special Representative is also the co-ordinating office between the United Nations system and the Global Project to Promote the Decade of Disabled Persons, a unique working relationship involving the United Nations, organizations of disabled persons and the private sector to enhance awareness and support to the needs of disabled persons.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1989, Supplement No. 7 (E/1989/25), chap. I, sect. D.

2/ See the report of the Interregional Consultation on Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes (E/CONF.80/10), chap. III.

3/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.89.IV.8.

4/ See Report of the World Assembly on Aging, Vienna, 26 July to 6 August 1982 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.I.16), chap. VI, sect. A.

5/ A/37/391/Add.1 and Corr.1, annex, sect. VIII, recommendation 1 (IV).

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.5/1991/3/Corr.1
12 February 1991

ENGLISH ONLY

COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Thirty-second session
Vienna, 11-20 February 1991
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

MONITORING OF INTERNATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

Major issues and programme activities of the Secretariat and the regional commissions relating to social development and welfare and specific social groups

Report of the Secretary-General

Corrigendum

Page 15, paragraph 68, line 6

For 1990 read 1991

Page 17, paragraph 78, line 5

For 4-11 May 1990 read 7-11 May 1990

Page 22, paragraph 93, last line

For United Nations read United States

Page 23, footnote 5

For A/37/391/Add.1 read A/37/351/Add.1

*E/CN.5/1991/1.

V.91-21368 wpf

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.5/1991/3/Corr.2
12 February 1991

ARABIC/ENGLISH/FRENCH AND SPANISH ONLY

COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Thirty-second session
Vienna, 11-20 February 1991
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

MONITORING OF INTERNATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

Major issues and programme activities of the Secretariat and the regional commissions relating to social development and welfare and specific social groups

Report of the Secretary-General

Corrigendum

Page 14, paragraph 62, line 5

For 1991-2001 read 1992-2001

*E/CN.5/1991/1.

V.91-21370 wpf

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.5/1991/3/Add.1
15 January 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Thirty-second session
Vienna, 11-20 February 1991
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

MONITORING OF INTERNATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

Major issues and programme activities of the Secretariat and the regional commissions relating to social development and welfare and specific social groups

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Social welfare and social development activities of the regional commissions for the biennium 1989-1990

*E/CN.5/1991/1.

V.91-20330 7319T

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION		1	3
I.	ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE	2-6	3
	A. Social development and welfare	2-3	3
	B. Aging	4	3
	C. Family issues	5-6	4
II.	ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC	7-32	4
	A. Social development and welfare	7-15	4
	B. Youth	16-18	5
	C. Aging	19-21	6
	D. Disabled persons	22-24	7
	E. Substance abuse prevention and rehabilitation	25-28	7
	F. Education for all	29-32	8
III.	ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN	33-45	9
	A. Social development and welfare	34-39	9
	B. Youth	40-43	11
	C. Aging	44-45	11
IV.	ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA	46-60	12
	A. Social development and welfare	46-50	12
	B. Youth	51-54	14
	C. Aging	55-57	15
	D. Disabled persons	58-60	15

INTRODUCTION

1. In response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1981/20 of 6 May 1981, in which the Council requested the regional commissions to report to the Commission for Social Development at its biennial sessions on social welfare and social development activities, four of the regional commissions have provided the information set out in sections I-IV below. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has advised the Secretariat that it is unable to report on its activities, given the current circumstances in the region.

I. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

A. Social development and welfare

2. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is engaged in a long-term research effort, recently initiated, to collect and analyse information on the various population-related social and economic policies in the majority of the ECE countries. The project currently focuses on policies related to fertility and family, and international migration, as well as the elderly and aging, but may be extended in the future to include other relevant policies. The long-term objective is to monitor shifts in population-related policies in countries of the various subregions, such as the European Community or central and eastern Europe, as these subregions undergo major institutional, political or economic reforms.

3. The Conference of European Statisticians, a principal subsidiary body of ECE, engages in a number of activities related to social development. In September 1990 it convened at Ottawa an intergovernmental meeting on the demographic and economic consequences and implications of changing population age structures. The meeting was organized in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); the topics discussed at the meeting included causes of changes in the age structure, consequences of changes in the age structure for public revenues and expenditure, and implications for the labour force of changing population age structures. Other activities in the ECE programme of work for future years may also be of interest, such as the publication on short-term and long-term international migration flows within the ECE region and between ECE countries and other regions (planned for 1992), the publication of a statistical volume on the situation of women (and men) in the ECE region (planned for 1993), and the publication of a statistical volume containing basic tables from the 1990 round of population and housing censuses in the ECE region (also planned for 1993).

B. Aging

4. With the support of UNFPA, ECE is carrying out research into various aspects of population change in the countries of the region and their interaction with social and economic development. The work includes finalization of a volume entitled Advanced Population Aging in Europe and North America: Economic and Demographic Aspects, which will incorporate studies on demographic aspects of population aging and its impact on the economy, public spending and the labour market. It also includes preparations for further research into demographic characteristics and social and economic conditions of the elderly in the ECE countries, which may be studied on the basis of microdata census samples of households having at least one elderly member, to be drawn from population censuses taken in or around 1990.

C. Family issues

5. ECE took part in the International Conference on Aging Populations in the Context of the Family, held from 15 to 19 October 1990 at Kitakyushu (Japan), which was organized by the United Nations Secretariat (Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division) and the municipal government of Kitakyushu, in collaboration with, among others, the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. In its contribution to the Conference, entitled "Changing patterns of first marriage, divorce and remarriage in Europe and North America", ECE summarized early findings, pertaining to women, of its larger ongoing study of post-second-World-War trends in marriage formation and dissolution in the countries of the ECE region. For a number of countries since the 1960s, the findings indicate a decline in the number of first marriages, associated with increases in the number of divorces and a decline in the incidence of remarriage among divorced persons.

6. In view of the recent major changes in family formation and dissolution, as well as continued low fertility in most countries of Europe and North America, ECE is promoting internationally comparable surveys on family and fertility behaviour. Possibly 10 or more countries may make such surveys in the period 1991-1995, using a common approach and questionnaire that are now being developed by the ECE. The survey data would become the basis for cross-country comparative analyses of determinants of this behaviour, including the effects of selected social policy measures related to the family and human reproduction.

II. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

A. Social development and welfare

1. Major issues and recent developments

7. During the past four decades, the development strategies adopted by most countries of the Asia and Pacific region have been based on a unisectoral approach, which emphasized economic growth as the main instrument to eradicate poverty. A sizeable majority of the developing countries have achieved striking growth rates. Paradoxically, the number of people living in absolute poverty has actually increased. Approximately nine tenths of the world's absolute poor live in the region covered by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

8. The approach to social issues that stems from this "economistic" approach to development tends to be ad hoc and crisis-management-oriented. The economistic approach means that the ultimate costs of development are shouldered by those segments of society least able to bear them. In the pursuit of short-term economic gains, the long-term consequences of a style of economic development that neglects social issues are ignored.

9. While there have been important exceptions, many developing countries of the region have neglected public participation in development decision-making. One outcome is that many countries have encountered difficulties in adjusting to rapid technological change in their efforts to industrialize and modernize. Inadequate attention to human needs and the conditions influencing subjective

well-being in development planning and programming has been associated with social alienation and civil unrest in some parts of the region.

10. The rate of rural-urban migration has accelerated throughout the ESCAP region as people search for remunerative work opportunities and the other widely advertised "benefits" of urban life. This has profoundly affected family function and structure in both sending and recipient communities. New policy approaches are called for that will tackle imbalances in the strains imposed on the weakest family members, particularly among the poorer sections of society.

11. Social development policy and planning in the region has conventionally dealt with social issues on a piecemeal basis. A policy approach that treats each issue separately has resulted in the creation of a plethora of government offices to deal with individual social concerns.

12. There is an emerging appreciation of the need to adopt a comprehensive and integrated policy approach to social development in the region. This approach recognizes the fundamental importance of intersectoral co-ordination at all stages of the planning cycle - national policy formulation, sectoral and subnational strategy development, programme formulation and implementation, and continuous monitoring, evaluation and upgrading of policies. Co-ordination is essential both horizontally across sectors and vertically between the central and local levels.

13. ESCAP has requested the Secretariat to provide regional support to national efforts to develop viable strategies to integrate social concerns and the human dimension into overall development policy and planning as a means of ensuring progress and stability in the region.

2. Activities of ESCAP

14. Social development policy and co-ordination. A project to formulate a regional social development strategy to the year 2000 and beyond has been initiated by ESCAP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project is structured around the three themes of distributive justice, eradication of poverty and popular participation. A draft strategy will be presented to the Fourth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Welfare and Social Development, to be held at Manila in October 1991.

15. An analytical survey of the quality of life in the ESCAP region is in progress. Methodological studies to design the survey framework have been completed. The survey is a major ESCAP activity in implementation of the Jakarta Plan of Action on Human Resources Development in the ESCAP Region, adopted by the Commission at its forty-fourth session in April 1988. 1/

B. Youth

1. Major issues and recent developments

16. Few countries in the ESCAP region have as yet developed an explicit national youth policy. Among the countries that have national youth policies, there are significant differences. In large part, the differences reflect unevenness in the sophistication and comprehensiveness of the youth policies *per se*. Moreover, as countries in the region move towards more sophisticated

and comprehensive national youth policies, they may run the risk of detaching youth policy from the larger national development plan and policies.

17. The provision of adequate training for young people in the region is of particular concern because of the relatively high incidence of illiteracy, unemployment and drug abuse among young people compared with older age groups. While there has been a quantum jump in the outreach of youth training programmes in the past decade, several issues do not appear to have been dealt with adequately. These include: (a) the quantitative sufficiency of youth training efforts compared with the magnitude of the need for training; (b) access by young women to training opportunities outside gender-stereotyped roles and occupations; and (c) integration of the diverse training efforts into a coherent policy to develop youth's resources.

2. Activities of ESCAP

18. Participation of youth in development. Youth projects include the following: a project to analyse national experiences of human resource development policies pertaining to youth; efforts to strengthen youth organizations in the promotion of functional literacy; a seminar on the effects of new technologies on the working life of young people; training workshops for trainers in youth work; and a seminar and field study on programmes to rehabilitate juvenile delinquents.

C. Aging

1. Major issues and recent developments

19. In consideration of policies and programmes to enhance the participation of elderly persons in development in the ESCAP region, distinctions need to be made between responses to: (a) the current situation of elderly persons in the region compared with the situation of elderly persons 30 to 40 years into the future, based on projected development trends; and (b) the condition of elderly persons who are well-integrated into family and community life compared with those who are dislocated from family and kinship networks, and are destitute or disabled.

20. From a regional perspective, the prospects for aging societies are much more significant than the current situation would suggest. As the majority of the developing countries in the ESCAP region still have some 30-40 years before their societies will be considered "aged", the 1990s present an appropriate decade for the initiation of pre-emptive policy and programme responses. Serious preparation for the continued economic, social and political participation of elderly persons must involve comprehensive efforts affecting the entire life span of individuals, particularly covering health maintenance, skill development and income support.

2. Activities of ESCAP

21. Participation of the elderly in development. To catalyse action in the region to promote life-time preparation for the aging of societies, ESCAP is preparing a study on policy issues and proposals for action. A project proposal has been prepared on the integration of elderly persons in development planning. The project is aimed at facilitating regional exchanges among policy and programme personnel to deal more effectively with this newly emerging issue.

D. Disabled persons

1. Major issues and recent developments

22. Widespread ignorance, aversion and stigmatization act as barriers to the social integration of people with disabilities. Those barriers block access to education, training, employment, social and cultural participation and the exercise of full citizenship. The physical environment in most countries of the region is not designed to facilitate the spatial mobility and socio-economic independence of people with disabilities. Greater public recognition needs to be given to the fact that these impediments are a fundamental problem to be dealt with by society rather than by disabled people individually. The tendency in developing countries in the region is for disability issues to be accorded low priority and to be dealt with in a single ministry.

23. There is a need for regional technical co-operation activities to support the self-determination and self-help of people with disabilities, especially through stimulating the removal of physical and social environmental barriers.

2. Activities of ESCAP

24. Participation of disabled persons in development. To support the self-help movement of people with disabilities in the region, ESCAP has undertaken follow-up activities to a project to assist national disability prevention and rehabilitation programmes in the least developed countries through technical co-operation among developing countries. A multi-year project of assistance in the development of self-help organizations of disabled persons was initiated in 1990. A regional public awareness campaign on disability issues is planned to mark the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and to generate further action beyond it.

E. Substance abuse prevention and rehabilitation

1. Major issues and recent developments

25. Demand for illicit drugs is growing rapidly in the ESCAP region. The problem takes on particular seriousness because of its wide social repercussions, especially with respect to crime, prostitution and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). There is a growing recognition that the drug abuse problem in the ESCAP region not only relates to illicit drugs but extends to various licit drugs, such as alcohol and tobacco. It has been asserted that in many countries of the region alcohol and nicotine do more harm than do all the illicit drugs combined.

26. The potential increase of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and AIDS in the ESCAP region is comparable to that in Africa. The professional sex industry is highly developed in some countries of the region. Prostitutes and drug users, many of whom are also intravenous drug users, are overlapping populations. Moreover, as there is a very high correlation between alcohol use and dangerous sexual practices, alcohol must be taken into consideration in AIDS-related policies.

27. Discouraging results from efforts to control supply in the region are leading to an increase in the attention being given to the control of the demand for drugs as a complementary strategy. Recent experience indicates

that efforts to control demand must be broadly based. They must take fully into account the human costs associated with rapid social change as an important causal factor in drug abuse. Experience also suggests that efforts to control the demand for drugs should be integrated into broad social development policies to encourage the assumption of personal responsibility and a productive role for individuals in a smoothly functioning society.

2. Activities of ESCAP

28. Health and development. Since 1988, ESCAP has undertaken several projects to control the demand for drugs. They concern the development of data and information systems for use in demand control; study of drug abuse rehabilitation processes in the region; assistance in the development of drug abuse prevention programmes; and promotion of integrated community-based drug abuse programmes to control the demand for drugs.

F. Education for all

1. Major issues and recent developments

29. While the percentage of illiterate persons in the ESCAP region has decreased over the past 15 years, the absolute numbers have increased. Male illiteracy has decreased but the number of female illiterates has risen, reflecting the persistence of social and cultural constraints on female participation. The trend is towards an increase in the numbers of out-of-school children and youth, especially among the rural poor. Unbalanced investment in favour of tertiary academic education has resulted in a problem of unemployment among graduates in many ESCAP countries, alongside a shortage of skilled vocationally trained labour.

30. There are large differences in educational attainment levels both among and within countries of the region: nine developing countries in the region have achieved 80 per cent or higher literacy rates; seven have literacy rates below 50 per cent; South Asian female illiteracy rates far exceed those in East and South-East Asia; it is estimated that rural literacy rates lag 20 percentage points behind those for urban areas in many countries in the region.

31. ESCAP, at several recent sessions, has called attention to the grave implications of the illiteracy problem in the region for social equity and human resource development. To remedy the problem, the focus of education planning will have to shift from the macro level to take full account of the local situation of learners. Literacy programmes will have to be designed with greater learner participation and be of practical relevance in improving the lives of learners.

2. Activities of ESCAP

32. Literacy and basic education. To assist the countries of Asia and the Pacific in following up the decisions reached at the World Conference on Education for All, convened at Jomtien (Thailand) in March 1990, ESCAP has initiated a regional follow-up project with the collaboration of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The project focuses on preparation of a programme of action to support education for all in the region.

III. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

33. During the biennium 1989-1990, the work programme of the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was oriented towards two fundamental objectives: (a) the analysis of the role and functions of member States and other social agents and the elaboration of social policies coherent with the characteristics of each national situation; and (b) the integration of women into the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean. The execution of the programme was carried out through four programme elements: changes in social structure and identification of agents of development; styles of development; social policies in a time of crisis; and the integration of women into development.*

A. Social development and welfare

1. Major issues and recent developments

34. The major issues in the region concerning social development and welfare were the promotion of development with social equity and the management of the economic and social crisis by Governments greatly affected by the problem of external debt and the reduction of their public expenditure. As a consequence of the crisis and growing popular discontent, the question of democracy and the relation of the State to society, in particular to the lower and middle classes, also became an essential element in the search for equitable development. In terms of strategies, the development of human resources was seen as an essential component of both equity and democracy.

2. Activities of ECLAC

35. The Social Development Division of ECLAC was principally involved in studies on the main changes in the social structure at the regional level, the characteristics and orientations of strategic social groups, the various modalities of popular social participation and alternative forms of association, the changes in the orientation of social and economic trends in Latin America in relation to styles of development, and the evolution of social policies in the countries of the region.

36. As a result of research activities, technical publications and reports were issued on the following topics: the dynamics of social deterioration in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1980s; a hopeful vision of democracy; economic structure, social relations and equity; specificity of the State in Latin America; continuity and change in the role of the State in Latin America; social control and ecopolitics in Brazil; the institutional dimension of the Amazonian ecological disaster: bureaucracy, diplomacy and ecopolitics in Brazil; economic transformations and social groups in Chile; the crisis and policies for urban housing in Latin America; changes affecting the social structure and social actors; the challenges of planning in the face of the development crisis: social organizations, democratization and social justice; current socio-economic dynamic in Costa Rica and the options for social

---

*A report on ECLAC activities in the subprogramme on integration of women in development is rendered annually to the Commission on the Status of Women.

development at the end of the twentieth century; Peru in the 1990s: a possible way; development with equity: decision-making process, formulation of policies and social development in Latin America; social policies in a time of crisis: some Latin American experiences; human resources, poverty and development strategies; population, work force and the under-utilization of human resources in Latin America; the development of human resources for the articulation between productive modernization and social integration; main social tendencies in Latin America in the 1980s; the State and the formulation of social policies in Latin America: guidelines for the study of the decision-making process in the health sector; formulation of an analytical typology for the Latin American countries: productive structure and styles of development; options and false dilemmas for the 1990s: the new and the old in social policies in Latin America; organization of the health sector: distributive effort and equity; economic migrations and social impact in Central America; consequences of Brazil's recession in the 1980s: socio-demographic indicators; the heterogeneity of poverty in Montevideo; statistical information on basic education and social conditions in Montevideo households; models of socialization in Latin America and the Caribbean: documentary research; options for the execution of social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean; the ecopolitics of the Amazon's destruction; the ecopolitics of sustainable development: a Latin American vision of the global environmental agenda; decentralization in Latin America: current problems of selective social policies; democracy and sustainable environment in Latin America; poverty and sustainable environment in Latin America: problems and political options; social policies and social development in the beginning of the 1990s; equity: conceptual aspects and future tasks; the role of the State in changing production patterns with social equity; social and economic significance of drug abuse and illicit traffic in Latin America and the Caribbean; and indicators of socio-economic development for 1950-1980.

37. A major new output is the new Report on the Social Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, the first issue of which was prepared at the end of 1990. The Division is also preparing four national studies on social policies (Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) and a series of reports on national social expenditure in Latin America. A technical report on social images of modernization and technological transformation was completed. Similarly, a sales publication was issued on Occupational Transformation and Social Crises in Latin America and another book entitled The 1990s: Development with equity? was published jointly with the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences. In addition, two technical reports on the magnitude of poverty in Latin America in the 1980s and an estimation of the magnitude of poverty in Chile were prepared by the Statistical Division of ECLAC.

38. During the period several seminars and regional meetings were organized by ECLAC: Social Development Options for the 1990s (San José, Costa Rica, 15-18 November 1988); Latin America and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (San José, Costa Rica, 8-12 May 1989); Development, Democracy and Equity: the experience of Sweden and Latin America, organized in collaboration with the International Centre of the Swedish Workers' Movement (Santiago, Chile, 29-31 May 1989); International Conference on the Social Economy Sector and Equitable Development, organized in collaboration with the General Confederation of Co-operatives of Chile and the Ibero-American Co-operation Institute of Spain (Santiago, Chile, 20-22 June 1989); Industrial Restructuring and International Competitiveness: the Case of Italy, organized in collaboration with the Joint UNIDO/ECLAC Division of Industry

and Technology (Santiago, Chile, 20-21 July 1989); and an expert working group meeting on social aspects of changing production patterns with social equity (Santiago, Chile, 13 September 1990).

39. Finally, advisory services were rendered to the Governments of Argentina (social policy proposals); Belize (identification of the most important social problems); Bolivia (elaboration of social policies); Costa Rica (formulation of social policies); Ecuador (strategies and planning social development, in collaboration with UNESCO); and Venezuela (formulation of social policies).

B. Youth

1. Major issues and recent developments

40. Among the major issues affecting youth in the region were the continuing economic crisis, which affected access to and quality of education and productive employment, and a weakening of traditional mechanisms for social and occupational mobility.

2. Activities of ECLAC

41. During the biennium 1989-1990, policy-oriented research was carried out on the situation and problems of youth during the decade of the 1980s. Computer analysis of household survey data from several countries in the region in different years concentrated on changes in education, economic activity, occupational status and income of subgroups of youth by age, sex and rural/urban residence. Interpretation of these findings concentrated on policy implications of recent trends and on proposals for action.

42. As a result of research activity in the field of youth, technical publications were issued on the following topics: integration of young people into Latin American societies: problems and prospects; regional issues in Latin America and the Caribbean on co-ordination of integrated youth policies and programmes; changes in Latin American youth in the 1980s in education and occupational status; objectives and conceptual basis of the design of the National Youth Survey in Uruguay; Problems of Youth in Central America and the Caribbean Basin (book published jointly with the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences; and the search for new equations for the incorporation of youth in the development process.

43. The following meetings were held by ECLAC in the field of youth: an interagency meeting on youth in Latin America and the Caribbean (Quito, Ecuador, June 1990); a workshop for non-governmental organizations in the field of youth with representatives of the National Institute of Youth of the Government of Chile; and an informal meeting of specialized agencies with representatives of the National Institute of Youth of the Government of Chile, both at ECLAC headquarters at Santiago, Chile. Technical assistance was rendered to the Government of Uruguay on the design and application of a national youth survey.

C. Aging

1. Major issues and recent developments

44. Among the major issues and recent developments in the field of aging in Latin America and the Caribbean were, on the one hand, the accelerating

process of population aging now affecting almost all countries in the region and, on the other hand, the double crisis of economic growth and government finance. Living standards of the elderly, their opportunities for productive employment and retirement benefits were adversely affected, particularly as social security and pension fund systems also went into crisis in most countries of the region in recent years.

2. Activities of ECLAC

45. Policy-oriented research was carried out on the situation of the elderly in Latin America. Emphasis was placed on economic conditions, types of household of the elderly, and problems of social security. As a result of these research activities, technical reports were issued on the following topics: the elderly in Latin America as a strategic sector for social planning in the 1990s; living conditions for the elderly: development and family context; social security and the problems of old age in Latin America; aging in Latin America: the need for a social agenda; and social and economic issues of social security for the elderly in Latin America.

IV. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

A. Social development and welfare

1. Major issues and recent developments

46. The decade of the 1980s was characterized by severe and progressive deterioration in practically all facets of Africa's socio-economic development, eroding many of the impressive gains achieved in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. The result was human suffering and misery on an unprecedented scale. The unyielding crisis was the consequence of a number of internal and external factors. On the endogenous side, there were structural imbalances and weaknesses of the African economy and domestic policy failures. The coalescence of these factors allowed persistent differentials between rural and urban areas to continue unabated, giving impetus to massive rural-urban migration, which in turn explains, to a large extent, the low productivity of the rural sector, culminating in severe food crisis and food insecurity. Disproportionate attention directed towards a few large-scale manufacturing industries, and widespread application of import-substitution, based on capital-intensive technologies, did not adequately respond to the need for employment creation and labour absorption. Thus, high levels of unemployment, especially among youth and to some extent women, remained throughout the 1980s. Natural calamities, such as severe and persistent drought, cyclones and locust infestations resulted in mass starvation in the affected countries. The crisis was worsened by incessant conflicts, civil strife and the destabilization policies of apartheid South Africa all of which culminated in a massive refugee problem and displacement of a large number of persons. Also, there was a lack of demographic transition, as the population continued to increase at the rapid rate of over 3 per cent per annum, thereby exerting pressure on the already limited and overstretched infrastructural facilities, especially in the areas of education, health, employment and housing.

47. On the exogenous side, worsening terms of trade, the result of a persistent fall in prices for Africa's primary commodities, were compounded by an inhospitable international economic environment. Africa's external debt burden escalated from $US 48 billion in the late 1970s to $US 250 billion by the end

of the 1980s, representing 99 per cent of total gross national product (GNP). The debt service ratio of sub-Saharan Africa increased from 11 per cent of total export earnings at the beginning of the 1980s to 27 per cent in 1988. At the same time, external resource flows decreased from $US 21.2 billion in 1982 to $US 18 billion in 1986, thus falling below the mark that could offset the fall in export earnings. The situation was exacerbated by the widespread implementation of orthodox structural adjustment programmes, with devastating effects on the social sector, especially health, nutrition, education and employment. The implementation of stabilization and adjustment régimes, without due cognizance of the social impact of these measures, has been seriously questioned because of their negative impact, particularly on women and children.

48. In order to redress the situation and redirect adjustment and policy reform measures, to strike a balance between the economic and human and sectoral dimensions of development, various policy strategies have been adopted in the region. The most recent ones include the Khartoum Declaration: Towards a Human-Focused Approach to Socio-economic Recovery and Development in Africa (A/43/430, annex I); the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (A/44/315, annex)); the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation; 2/ and the African Charter for Social Action, adopted by the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs. These documents emphasize the interdependence between the economic factors and the human and social dimensions of development, the need to involve people in development efforts as both participants and beneficiaries, and the need to balance resource allocations.

2. Activities of the Economic Commission for Africa

49. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/39, the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) prepared a comprehensive report on the critical social situation in Africa as an annex to the 1989 Report of the World Social Situation. 3/ In it, the impact of the African economic crisis on living conditions in the region was analysed and directions and strategies in policy and planning for arresting the situation were indicated. As contributions to the 1989 and 1990 issues of the economic report on Africa and the 1988-1989 economic and social conditions in Africa and the publication Beyond Recovery: ECA Revised Perspective of Africa's Development 1988-2008, the secretariat provided an analysis of the human and social dimensions of Africa's development in the light of the negative consequences of the 1980s crisis. It also reviewed current efforts and initiatives to mitigate the severity of the crisis in order to achieve a more holistic approach to self-reliant and self-sustaining development.

50. In preparation for the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs, which the secretariat organized in collaboration with the Organization of African Unity at Arusha on 27 and 28 October 1989, several working documents were prepared, including a report on social development activities during the period between April 1985 and September 1989, a summary of social trends and major social development problems in Africa, and a report on the implication of social conditions, trends and problems, in which attention was paid to countries affected by drought, desertification and the refugee situation. The major outcome of the Fifth Meeting was the African Charter for Social Action, which sets out principles, objectives and strategies as the basis for social policies and action programmes at the national and regional

levels. In addition, a technical publication entitled Guidelines and Strategies for Enhancing Popular Participation Particularly for Rural Women and Youth in the Development Process in Africa was completed and widely disseminated to member States.

B. Youth

1. Major issues and recent developments

51. From demographic data it has been estimated that the youth population (between the ages of 15 and 25) in the African region is 20-30 per cent of the total population and the indications are that it will most probably exceed this figure by the turn of the century. Policy and programmes so far undertaken by African Governments have not yet, however, matched the growing needs, problems and aspirations of youth in the region. Youth unemployment and underemployment continue to rise. The exodus by young people from rural areas in search of better but highly competitive and limited job opportunities and social amenities in the urban centres continues to increase. Juvenile delinquency and criminality, including those associated with drug abuse, are increasingly becoming major concerns in several African countries. School drop-out rates have increased, particularly in the face of universal primary education and higher enrolment at the primary level without corresponding increases at the higher levels and in technical and vocational institutions. The health of young people in the region also poses a major challenge to African countries. As a sexually active population group, youth is highly vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV-AIDS.

52. The economic and social crisis of the 1980s has aggravated an already explosive situation: youth, as one of the most vulnerable population groups, has been hard hit by such measures as the reduced allocation of resources to social services, including education, health, housing, water and sanitation. Africa's achievement of the objectives of recovery and self-sustaining, self-reliant and long-term development will largely depend on the quality of its human resources; youth is Africa's reservoir of human resources, to whom the future well-being of the region will be entrusted. It is imperative that increased efforts and action be taken now and in the future to promote the effective mobilization of youth in Africa's development effort and to provide for their needs and protect their welfare. The Fifth Meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs called upon African Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to accelerate the implementation of the African Regional Plan of Action on youth 4/ and the guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth (A/40/256, annex).

53. In addition to these policy instruments, the regional strategies referred to in paragraph 50 above have made important policy pronouncements on specific population groups. All were endorsed by the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa.

2. Activities of ECA

54. Recent activities of the Commission concentrated on the preparation of studies and technical publications. To facilitate communication among youth organizations and between these organizations and other bodies involved in the field of youth, the secretariat compiled a directory of youth organizations in African countries. A study on the impact of rural youth employment programmes

on rural development analysed the extent to which rural programmes designed for young people had contributed to overall rural development efforts and their relevance to national development policies directed to the rural population. The survey of juvenile delinquency, crime and justice in the light of socio-economic conditions revealed that juvenile delinquency and crime were becoming increasingly grave problems in African countries and required more serious attention by all concerned. A study on the administration of juvenile justice in Ghana and Zimbabwe indicated the need to devise more diverse, diversionary and alternative approaches to dealing with the question of juvenile justice. The secretariat also prepared reports on the role and effectiveness of national youth organizations in the mobilization of youth for development and on youth policies and programmes as reflected in national development plans. Moreover, it contributed to and participated in the Expert Group Meeting on the Development of United Nations Standards on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency and the Interregional Preparatory Meeting on the Prevention of Delinquency, Juvenile Justice and the Protection of the Young, held in 1989 at Vienna and Riyadh respectively.

C. Aging

1. Major issues and recent developments

55. In the traditional African family, the elderly are accorded a privileged position. The process of modernization, however, manifested in increasing urbanization, industrialization, rates of rural-urban migration and changing family structures - particularly the increasing nuclearization of the family - is gradually transforming the unique position of the elderly in society.

56. At the same time, because the aging have been the smallest and least visible of the population groups in the region, little has been documented about their demographic, social and economic conditions. This situation will inevitably change. The Fifth Conference of Ministers of Social Affairs urged that member States should pay more attention to the status of the elderly, in the context of the International Plan of Action on Aging. 5/ Though in some countries it is not yet apparent, aging will undoubtedly emerge as an imposing issue in the near future.

2. Activities of ECA

57. The Commission's activities in the field of aging have been limited. During the biennium 1989-1990, a number of case studies were undertaken on the situation of the aging population, analysing national policies relevant to education, health and nutrition, housing and social security for the elderly, and demographic features and national infrastructure dealing with living conditions for the aging in the context of the family and community. It is envisaged that future activities in this field will be undertaken in the context of the forthcoming International Year of the Family.

D. Disabled persons

1. Major issues and recent developments

58. The total population of the African region is currently estimated at 591 million. Applying the criteria that 7-10 per cent of a given population may be disabled, then the disabled population in Africa ranges from 41.4 to 59.1 million, a figure exceeding the total population of many individual

African countries. This estimate might actually be conservative, given the prevalence of some of the root causes of disability in the region. Disability may be a result of inadequate programmes of primary health care, maternal health care and related services; frequent resurgence of endemic and epidemic diseases; undernourishment and starvation resulting in severe malnutrition and the curtailment of the body's natural defence mechanism; natural calamities, including repeated floods in some areas and droughts in others; environmental hazards, particularly those occasioned by heavy industries; various forms of accidents; and armed conflicts between nations, civil strife and wars of liberation.

59. The absence of adequate programmes and services for the prevention of disability and for the economic, social and medical rehabilitation of the disabled compounds the problem in the region. The availability of sufficient resources is crucial to the effective delivery of programmes and services. Unfortunately, the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992) has coincided with a period of social and economic regression in the region. As a result, the resource base of most African countries fell sharply in the 1980s, resulting in serious cutbacks in allocations. Under these circumstances, it was difficult for many African countries to attain the objectives of the Decade and to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons 6/ to any appreciable degree in spite of their best efforts.

2. Activities of ECA

60. The Secretariat focused its attention on promoting the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons 6/ and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992). In order to publicize the Decade and the World Programme of Action, a newsletter entitled "equal time" was launched and circulated widely to member States and other organizations involved in the field of disability. Besides promoting public awareness of the needs and situation of disabled persons in the region, the newsletter serves as a medium of exchange of information, experience and ideas on disabled persons and the various activities undertaken in the various African countries for their benefit. A directory of institutions, associations and organizations for disabled persons in African countries, their objectives, activities and accomplishments, was completed and disseminated. A report was prepared on the causes, types and prevalence of impairment and disability in African countries, in the light of adverse socio-economic conditions, focusing on Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania. Among the major findings of the report was the fact that, in spite of efforts by both governmental and non-governmental organizations in the two countries to provide services to the disabled, those efforts were not commensurate with the needs and problems of the growing number of disabled persons.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1988, Supplement No. 11 (E/1988/35), chap. IV, resolution 274 (XLIV).

2/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1990, Supplement No. 13 (E/1990/42), chap. IV.

3/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.89.IV.1.

4/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1984, Supplement No. 11 (E/1984/21), annex I.

5/ See Report of the World Assembly on Aging, Vienna, 26 July-6 August 1982 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.I.16), chap. VI, sect. A.

6/ A/37/351/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, annex, sect. VIII, recommendation 1 (IV).